UNDERSTANDING **MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**

WHAT IS MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER?

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Major depressive disorder (also known as major depression) is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States. It can seriously impact every aspect of a person's life—affecting how they feel, think, and handle everyday activities. Major depression can happen at any age but often begins in adulthood.

The exact causes of major depression are unknown, but some risk factors include a family history of depression and significant life changes such as trauma, stress, or death of a loved one. Major depression is also linked to other serious medical illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and Parkinson's disease.

COMMON SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

Some of these signs and symptoms must be present for at least two weeks to be diagnosed with major depressive disorder. Anyone who has questions should consult their doctor.

- Long-term feelings of sadness, hopelessness, pessimism, emptiness
- Anxiety, irritability, restlessness
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Loss of interest or joy in normal hobbies and activities
- Fatigue, lack of energy
- Changes in appetite that lead to weight loss or weight gain
- Moving, talking, or thinking more slowly
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Sleep issues such as insomnia, waking up very early, or sleeping too much
- Unexplained aches and pains, such as headaches or digestive problems
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts

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TYPES OF MAJOR DEPRESSION

THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF DISORDERS THAT FALL UNDER MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS:

Postpartum Depression affects women after childbirth and causes extreme anxiety and sadness, making it difficult for mothers to care for themselves and/or their babies.

Psychotic Depression is a form of depression with psychosis that may include delusions and/or hallucinations where the person is both depressed and out of touch with reality.

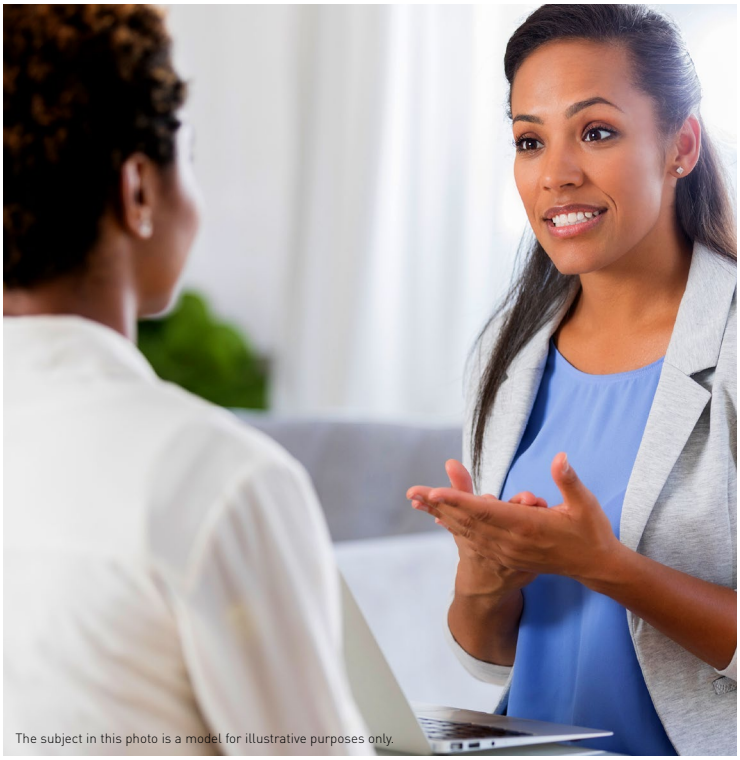
Seasonal Affective Disorder is a mood disorder directly caused by the time of the year, most often occurring in the winter months when sunlight is not as readily available.

Melancholic Depression is a form of depression in which people exhibit a complete loss of pleasure in all or almost everything.

TREATMENT

Even the most severe cases of depression can be treated with medication, therapy, or both. And the earlier a person begins treatment, the more effective it is. Treatment for major depression, just like hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, requires long-term management of symptoms.

- **Medication:** Antidepressant medicines may help improve the way a person's brain controls mood or stress and reduce symptoms. Antidepressants usually take two to four weeks to take effect. Sleep, appetite, and problems concentrating often improve before a noticeable mood shift, so it is important to give medication a chance to work.
- **Therapy:** Talking to a mental health professional is effective in helping people identify triggers, create positive behaviors, manage stress, set goals, and stick to a treatment plan.



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NEED HELP OR MORE INFORMATION?

If you or someone you know has major depressive disorder, these resources can help. Visit **SAMHSA's Early Serious Mental Treatment Locator** and **Behavioral Health Treatment Locator** at **SAMHSA.gov**. Or, call **SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)**.

Learn more at SAMHSA.gov/Serious-Mental-Illness